



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

For immediate release: Oct. 14, 2002 (02-53)

Contact: Dr. Robert Mead (360) 902-1878

Linda Waring (360) 902-1815

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560

## **Washington poultry and game bird owners urged to protect flocks, report signs of disease**

### **California reports outbreak of Exotic Newcastle Disease**

OLYMPIA — Following confirmation of Exotic Newcastle Disease in flocks of backyard birds in Southern California, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is urging poultry, fowl and game fowl owners to protect their flocks. And, Dr. Robert Mead, state veterinarian, is asking owners to report signs of illness among birds, such as sneezing, coughing, nasal discharge, diarrhea, listlessness, and sudden death to WSDA at (360) 902-1878 or the U.S. Department of Agriculture at (360) 753-9430.

Exotic Newcastle Disease is a highly contagious virus that affects a wide variety of birds. Birds may catch the virus through contact with other infected birds or contaminated materials, such as the clothing or shoes of humans who have been exposed to infected birds. While it poses no human health threat, some strains of the virus can kill nearly 100 percent of affected birds.

Exotic Newcastle Disease has not been detected in any Washington flocks; however, Mead warns that game fowl tend to move within states and between states outside of the normal animal movement safeguards and without regard to animal health requirements. Please report such shipments of game fowl into Washington to WSDA at (360) 902-1878 so that the birds can be tested to ensure they do not carry disease.

To protect birds from disease, disinfect footwear prior to entering or leaving a poultry facility, and wear disposable coveralls or put on clean clothes prior to entering a poultry site. Producers can also consider disinfecting tires on vehicles, bagging dirty clothing prior to leaving a premises and monitoring visitors, including feed providers, service personnel and poultry buyers to ensure they are following disinfecting procedures. Anyone in contact with backyard poultry or game bird flocks should shower and change clothes before coming into contact with commercial poultry.

“Producers who visit a feed store, a neighbor’s farm, coffee shop or grocery store should change clothes and disinfect footwear before returning to their poultry houses,” Mead said. “It’s just too easy to contaminate clothing or footwear with a disease-causing virus and then carry it home.”

A lab test is needed to confirm Exotic Newcastle Disease because signs of the virus mimic other poultry and bird diseases. State or federal veterinarians can work with private veterinary practitioners at no charge to collect samples for testing.

California's disease investigation started in late September after nearly 200 game fowl died on a property near Los Angeles.

MORE

Exotic Newcastle Disease — Page 2  
October 14, 2002

At this point, no commercial poultry operations are involved.

A fact sheet on Exotic Newcastle Disease is available on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Web site at  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/fsend.html>.

###